Nightmares

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Nightmares

by Lilcookiebug

Summary

Shadow stays late at the HQ to finish some late work. And ends up discovering two other late stayers in the infirmary. With him also discovering other things about them that night.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The soft light of the overhead lamp flickered softly as the black raven hedgehog sat there at that desk. Tapping his pen against the paper, as he sat there and tried to read over the contents again. After the third time of losing his place and having to start over. After all, he agreed to stay behind and finish this stuff. Since he skipped out on his other HQ responsibilities that week.

So he had to make it up. And he was already regretting skipping it over. Since it could've been done already.

If he had just been a little bit more patient.

Putting down the pen, he gave out a long sigh. It was the fifth time he had lost his place reading the paper. And he felt that he needed a break, since it was clear he wouldn't get any progress done like this.

"I need some coffee…maybe just the beans will work." Shadow said aloud, getting up from his chair. And walking out of the room. Leaving the unread paper on the desk with the flickering lamp.

Shadow walked through the eerie but vacant HQ, his steps echoing through the halls in the still darkness. Earlier today it had been filled with people, and bustling with activity and productivity all around.

Now all the noise is gone and left with complete and utter silence. Almost like world was frozen in place with how quiet it was.

It was almost unnerving to the hedgehog. Yet comforting at the same time. Since Shadow was known to hate loud noises and being around bustling activity.

Waking into the HQs kitchen area, he began his search for something that will keep his tired eyes open. Despite being the Ulimate Lifeform, he still feel victim to needing sleep. Despite half the time insisting he doesn't need it.

Did he really need it? Or is it just his body demanding him to sleep? Who knows. Shadow didn't really bother to try and find the answer.

Searching around some cupboards, he finally found the item he was longingly looking for: coffee beans. Shadow was never one to be caught with one of those instant coffee things. He always used the beans.

Whether that be actually making coffee or just eating them straight. It depended on wether or not he wanted to go the effort of making actual coffee. Which sometimes he did put the effort in. And sometimes not.

He was rather unpredictable after all.

Shadow turned over to the coffee machine resting on the counter, and thought for a few seconds. Before deciding this time he'll put some effort in. Since he figured he needs the

coffee to stay awake.

After preparing the ingredients, he stood next to the machine as it made small rumbles of noises. Signifying that it was awake and starting to make the coffee. Tapping his fingers against the counter, Shadow stood there waiting for the small noise that alerted him that the liquid was done.

That's when his eyes started to wander around the room, as if it was searching for something. What that thing was? He had no clue. But his eyes still kept looking around as if he was a machine programmed to.

That's when his ruby red eyes landed on something peculiar. Something that he wasn't quite expecting to see. Yet it felt familiar to him.

Getting up from where he was leaning on the counter, he walked over to another counter. And after feeling his hand around on it because of the dark. He felt what his eyes had focused on so intently. Cupping his hand around the object, he brought it close to him. And opened his hand to reveal the object to him.

It was two small used tea bags. It seemed to be a kind that Shadow wasn't familiar with. He grabbed the tea bag by their tags, and squinted his eyes to try and read the label that was on the small bags.

"Black tea" is what was printed on the small bags.

Shadow blinked a few times after reading that. Black tea? Who would drinking that stuff during these hours? Since Shadow could very much tell the bags were only used recently. From how wet they still were.

And he only knew two people in this HQ that drank tea..

Wait. They couldn't possibly be here right? At this hour? What would they be doing here? And why would they be drinking such tea-

Shadow was suddenly snapped out of his thoughts when he heard a small beeping noise. Whipping his head over to the coffee machine, he realized that it was the sound the notified him that the liquid was done brewing. And now was ready to drink.

Shadow blinked his eyes again, before walking over to the pot. Unhooking the container from the machine and then bringing the mug over to the clear container that contained the coffee. He poured himself a mug of coffee in the quiet of night.

Placing the pot back on the machine, Shadow brought the mug to his lips. And took a slight sip of the rich liquid. The bitter and strong notes hitting his taste buds immediately. Already proving to help the hedgehog stay awake.

After finishing having his fill of coffee (which was about 3 cups). He set the mug back on the counter, and stretched out his arms. His senses already starting to tingle from the amount of energy his body just received.

It having trouble to keep up a bit.

Shadows eyes then wandered back onto the small tea bags that laid on the counter. Wondering to himself if he should investigate at all. Since he had a good idea on who exactly would make such tea at this hour.

Placing the mug in the sink, he then walks out of the kitchen. And starts walking through the empty HQ again. His footsteps being soft and the only sound in those vacant halls. Which he didn't really mind at all.

That's when he walked past the infirmary and stopped. Looking closely at the door, he saw… the light on?

Was someone else still here? It would explain the random used tea bags..

Stepping near the door and slightly creaking it open. Shadow popped his head in just enough to see inside the room. And confirmed his suspicions about the tea bags.

There sitting on the beds alone, while holding their own tea cups. Was Espio the chameleon and Rouge the bat. The two people he suspected to have tea at this hour.

Shadow took one look at the sight, before opening up the door fully. And stepping into the room.

"What's with the slumber party in here? And at this hour as well." Shadow asked, with Espio and Rouge quickly turning to look at him. As they were not expecting his presence in the slightest.

"Well? Are you going to answer me?" Shadow asked while leaning on the door.

Espio blinked a few times before sighing and shaking his head. With Rouges eyes darting from Espio and Rouge.

"We were just relaxing in here…" Espio replied, placing his cup of tea on a nearby table.

"It's okay to just relax in the infirmary? I thought you scolded Tangle about that." Shadow said, crossing his arms. With Rouge and Espio looking at each other and then back at Shadow.

"It's just for one night-"

"We don't have time to listen to your lectures." Espio cut Rouge off with, giving Shadow a silent glare.

"Doesn't seem very fair that you lectured Tangle about it. And then went back on it." Shadow stated.

Rouge noticed as Espios eye gave a small twitch, the chameleon seeming to be more agitated than usual. With Rouge going over and rubbing his back. Not paying attention to the hedgehog in the doorway in the slightest.

Shadow looked at the scene unfolding, and raised his brow. He suddenly took notice of Espios and Rouges more..disheveled appearances.

Rouges hair was a bit messy and hastily tied in a ponytail. Espios scale colors were a bit more faint and not as vibrant as they usually are. The clothes they were wearing wasn't their usual uniforms. But simple and fitting clothes like sweatpants and shirts. Things that they weren't known for wearing.

But the thing that caught Shadows eye the most. Was their eyes.

Underneath them was large and prominent black eyebags. Their makeup not even visible… wait. They didn't even have any makeup on. Espio had no eyeliner. And Rouges eyeshadow was nowhere to be found.

Shadow just stood there in complete silence.

Staring.

He didn't know what to make of the situation. This..wasn't like them. Even if he hadn't paid that much attention to the HQ. He was at least familiar enough with these two to know their usual attitudes and looks.

This was different and new to him.

"You guys look awful." Shadow suddenly blurred out, his mind not having the time to fully register how rude that sounded.

Espio and Rouges turned and gave Shadow the most cold and angry glare he had ever seen in his life.

Not even any of the dastardly villains they had faced had ever seen such a glare.

Shadow shook his head and cleared his throat "I apologize…that sounded rude."

"You think..?" Espio immediately responded, continuing to glare at the hedgehog.

Rouge shook her head and gave a sigh "Look Shadow…we're not in the mood to deal with you or your antics right now.."

"You say that as if I'm a bother to you." Shadow responded, not being able to hide the cold tone in his voice.

Espio and Rouge sat there for a moment, staring at the hedgehog. The hedgehog noticing how their eyes could barely focus on him. While also having trouble staying open.

"Why are you two even here? It's late at night. And also…having tea that will keep you up? When you look like you haven't slept in weeks. What's up with you two?" Shadow asked.

"Are you just going to sit there and lecture us?" Espio asked, not even acknowledging any of Shadows questions.

“I’m not trying to lecture you-“

“It sure sounds like it!” Espio cut Shadow off with, the sudden change in the chameleons voice catching the hedgehog off guard.

Rouge moved closer to the chameleon on the bed. Continuing to rub Espios back, trying to calm him down. With Espio turning to look at her, and him starting to breathe slower again. With Rouge holding one of his hands tightly and squeezing it.

“I really wasn’t trying to lecture you two. I’m just trying to understand the situation. Does anyone know you two are still here?” Shadow explained, trying his best to control his tone.

Rouge looked over at Shadow “No. nobody knows. And we don’t really care..”

“No one knows? So what? Does no one know you guys haven’t been sleeping? You sure as hell didn’t have those eyebags when I last saw you.”

“It’s easy to hide with makeup.” Rouge briefly responded. Not holding eye contact with Shadow in the slightest.

Shadow paused at that. They were hiding it? With makeup?

The hedgehog suddenly recalled lately the chameleon and bat had been defensive about their makeup. Quicker to snap at anyone who tried to touch their face or makeup. He had just figured maybe they just didn’t want anyone touching it. He wasn’t ever one to pay attention to stuff like that.

Same with the tea…defensive over drinking a lot of tea. Snapping at anyone who tried to tell them not to have that much.

The pieces were slowly clicking into place. As the hedgehogs slow realization began to unfold like a flower blooming in the spring. He then turned to look at Espio and Rouge.

“…You’ve been doing this for months. And have been hiding it from everyone.” Shadow finally stated.

Espio and Rouge looked over at him again. The silence between the three being so thick. As think as a covering of fog in a storm.

“Do you have any idea what you two are doing?! You’re harming yourselves!” Shadow suddenly cried out, his voice laced with anger and concern.

Espio stared at him, the hedgehog pausing at seeing the soulless look in his once vibrant topaz eyes.

“Why? Why haven’t you two been sleeping?” Shadow asked, trying to calm his nerves.

The two mobians sitting on the bed didn’t say anything. Just continued to stare at Shadow, which started to unnerve the dark hedgehog. Since he had never seen such looks before.

He then started to reach back into his mind. Why would they act like this? When did this start? They certainly weren't like this months ago-

That's when a light bulb went off in his head. The timeline…The Metal Virus.

They didn't act like this before the virus hit.

And they were two of the only survivors that survived through the whole thing.

Shadow didn't know anything about what happened during the virus. He had gotten turned very early when it hit. Due to a very…not proud moment. Which he himself acknowledges was a mistake.

The fake hedgehog took a deep breath, and breathed it out softly. Ready to ask this question and preparing to (probably) get chewed out.

"Does this relate to the virus at all?" Shadow asked, his voice calm as he could manage.

Espio and Rouge sat there for a few moments in silence. Before Espio let out a bitter laugh.

"Oh? Is the Ulimate Lifeform suddenly a detective? I thought that was my job." Espio said, the clear bitterness present in his voice. Which made Shadows ears twitch a bit.

"Answer the question." Shadow stated.

"Yes."

Espio and Rouge both answers in very monotone voices. Which made Shadow not expect that. For all of this behavior was very…peculiar to him. And he was determined to get to the bottom of the problem.

"Why haven't you told anyone you haven't been sleeping?" Shadow asked.

"Is it really their business? And why do you care at all." Espio responded back, his tone taking on an icy edge.

"After all…Shadow the hedgehog listens to nobody. Shadow the hedgehog doesn't lose. He's the Ulimate Lifeform who doesn't run. Even when someone is yelling at him to for his safety." Rouge chimed in, the last of her words being said through gritted teeth. With a glare that could penetrate through Shadows very skull.

"The Ulimate Lifeform is too good for everyone. No one bosses him around. No one will make a fool out of him. Even when he did because he cared more about his ego then the greater good." Espio continued, adding on to Rouges words. And saying his words through gritted teeth. With his own penetrating cold glare at the speechless hedgehog.

The hedgehog stood there, in complete and utter silence. For he wasn't prepared at all for the two to respond in such a way. All these feelings and emotions pointed straight at him. Like a crashing wave ready to sweep him away.

And yet.

He couldn't deny anything that they said.

Even if the words stung. Even if he wanted to fight back and defend himself.

He couldn't.

Because he knew deep down. That he had let them down during the Metal Virus.

His mind flashed back to that moment.

That one moment.

Where he foolishly ignored the warnings of Sonic and Rouge. And made a fatal mistake.

That costed them so much.

He had never told anyone how ashamed of himself he felt at that mistake. But it wasn't until now that he realized how much it affected other people.

Especially the two that were sitting infront of him right now.

Shadow took a few deep breaths, trying to keep himself calm. His mind starting to search and craft a response.

An apology.

And he needed it to be sincere and perfect.

After a few more moments of silence, Shadow finally opened his mouth to speak.

"I'm…sorry for how I acted in the Metal Virus. I acted like someone who was above getting hurt…" Shadow began.

"And?" Espio asked, looking up at Shadow.

"A reckless moron."

"And?"

"A arrogant jerk."

"And?"

"A uncooperative and stubborn dick.."

Rouge gave a small giggle at the last one. With Espio blinking his eyes while looking at Shadow.

"You…didn't have to say all those things…I didn't think you actually meant-"

“I said what I said because it’s true. I let you both down during the Metal Virus. And I hold nothing but regret for it.” Shadow pauses, walking over to the beds and kneeling down on his knee.

“And I truly am sorry. Especially to you two. For I felt as I let you both down the most..” Shadow takes their hands and holds them in his. And looks up at the two.

“And I promise…I will never let you both down again..” Shadow declared softly, holding their hands tightly in his. Looking up at them with the most gentle and genuine expression he could have.

The bat and chameleon sat there in silence. They weren’t…expecting such a thing from someone like Shadow. It was new…it was different and strange to them.

“You…really promise us that? You won’t do something stupid and leave us alone again?” Rouge asked softly, looking down at his hand holding hers.

“I promise I will never leave you both again…I’ll be more careful. For you two.” Shadow response was, the soft look in his eyes convincing Espio and Rouge he was telling the truth.

Shadow then paused when he heard the soft sound of sniffing from the both of them. The entire virus and everything that happened heavily affected them. And the hedgehog could see it fully now.

Getting off the floor, Shadow shifted to sit on the bed with the two. And pulled them both into a deep hug. Letting their tears stain his chestfur, them snuggling into the soft surface. While making small sniffles.

Shadow was never the best with emotions and comforting. But right now he was going to try his best.

For them. For they needed it more than anything.

Shifting again on the bed, Shadow laid down while still having them on his chest. Grabbing the blanket and tossing it over the three of them. Making sure they were all bundled up.

“Comfortable?” Shadow softly asked.

Espio and Rouge softly nodded while nuzzling into his chest fur. Using the soft and fluffy surface as a pillow.

Shadow laid there in silence with the two of them. The warm embrace of the blanket around them providing a sense of comfort. The hedgehog reaching his hand out from the blanket and softly petting the two. Trying his best to comfort them the best he can.

“I’m sorry for leaving you alone during the virus..”Shadow softly whispered, continuing to pet them.

“It’s fine…” Espio responded softly.

“Just promise us to never do it again..” Rouge added on, nuzzling into his chestfur more.

Shadow looked down at the two and gave a soft smile.

“I promise.” Shadow affirmed the both of them.

The hedgehog reached out his hand and turned off the light to the infirmary. The room being surrounded in darkness in a matter of seconds. Expect for a small glow of a nightlight Tangle had installed a while ago.

Espio and Rouge let out soft yawns, while continuing to nuzzle into the soft chestfur. With Shadow in response a soft chuckle.

“You two should get some sleep…you deserve it.” Shadow said, moving to make sure they were comfortable.

Not a single objection from the pair was heard. Instead the soft sound of purring from the chameleon and bat was heard. With the hedgehog laying there, enjoying their comfort.

Never wanting to let them go. Or make a dumb mistake like the Metal Virus again.

He let them down once.

He never wanted to let them down again.

In that small room, is where he vowed to never leave them again.

To always be with them.

No matter what.

Until death does them part.

End Notes

Shadougpio! One of my favorite polys. Finally wrote something about them. I might do more with them soon. We'll see cause the world sucks. But I will forever keep on writing. lol.

Have a good day/night!💛

-Chiffon

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